

Judge Brown dies at 87

Abilenian served as state representative

- By [Jared Fields](#)

Abilene Reporter News

Raleigh Brown, a former Texas state representative, district and appeals circuit judge and civic leader, died late Saturday of a heart attack. He was 87.

"He was just a wonderful father and family man," said Brown's youngest daughter, Julie Denny.

A memorial service will be held at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday at St. Paul United Methodist Church. The family will receive friends from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday at 1454 Woodland Trail.

Denny said her father cared about people from all walks of life and took an interest in anyone he met.

"He got along with people from all ages as well -- people his age down to my age down to my children's age," Denny said. "He definitely enjoyed socializing and being with people."

Brown had three children, eight grandchildren and was expecting his first great-grandchild.

Brown served in many capacities in Abilene after first coming to the city in 1944 while stationed at Camp Barkeley. Brown was called into the Army while working to earn his undergraduate degree at Middle Tennessee State University College. He served four years during World War II. As a reservist, and while working toward his law degree, Brown was called up to serve in the Korean War for 19 months.

Brown met his wife, Margaret, while stationed at Camp Barkeley in 1944. The two were married 59 years before Margaret died in 2007.

After completing his law degree from Southern Methodist University, Brown was a lawyer in town before serving as a state representative from Taylor County from 1962 to 1966.

He resigned as representative to pursue a judicial post, and in 1967 he was appointed judge of the 42nd Judicial District and elected to a four-year term the following year.

In 1972 he was elected as justice to the 11th Court of Appeals in Eastland.

He served in that capacity until retiring in 1986. He then became presiding judge of the 7th Administrative District.

As a civic leader, Brown held many posts ranging from Chamber of Commerce president to the Abilene Board of Review for movies.

He was the first chairman of the Region 14 Education Service Center, serving from 1967 to 1972. He served as president of the West Texas Rehabilitation Center, Abilene Chamber of Commerce, Texas State Exchange Club and twice for the Abilene Country Club.

Brown worked with the Goodfellows, the United Fund, the City-County Child Welfare Board and was an active member of St. Paul Methodist Church.

And sometime in there, Brown liked playing golf. He was recovering from a March knee replacement surgery so he could enjoy golf again.

"He was an avid golfer; he and I played a lot of golf together," said attorney and friend Stanley Wilson. "He was a great guy to be around and had a great sense of humor. He tried to know everybody that he came in contact with."

Former mayor Fred Lee Hughes came to know Brown through church and work. Besides seeing Brown at church just about every Sunday, Hughes said, the two practically were neighbors as Brown's office and Hughes' car dealership sat near one another near North 3rd and Walnut streets.

"He was in Sunday school a week ago, the last time I saw him," Hughes said. "He had a good visit, drank a little coffee and talked about his knees being better."

While Hughes was on the City Council and Brown Chamber of Commerce president, four bond issues passed at the same time. The bonds paid for the Civic Center, Taylor County Coliseum, the County Courthouse and the airport.

His death "magnifies again how fragile life is," Hughes said.

Stanley Wilson said he was also surprised at the sudden loss of his good friend.

"He was a wonderful friend, a fine judge, a great citizen, and this community is going to miss him a lot."